THE HISTORY OF

ROCK

70p

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The roots of soul

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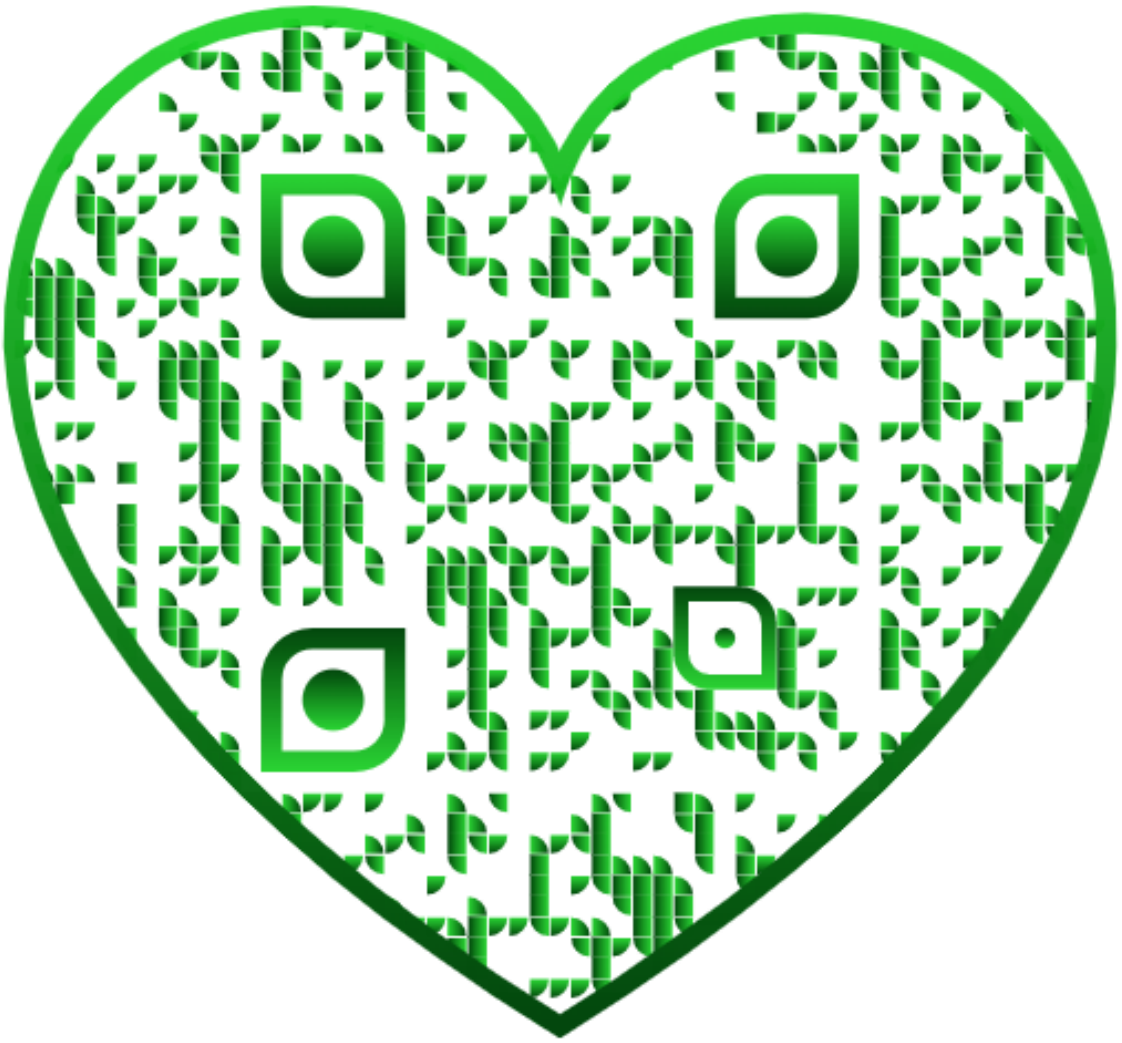

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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One of the most successful areas for rock in the late Fifties was Philadelphia, and the shop-window for the music was Dick Clark's 'American Bandstand' TV Show. Appearances on the show made overnight stars of such youngsters as Fabian, Bobby Rydell and Frankie Avalon, while the Philadelphia record labels strove to supply the nationwide demand for more product. Teen idols, then as now, were short-lived phenomena, however and Beatlemania ended the story.

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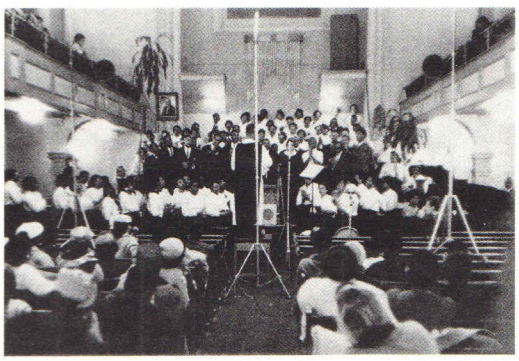
The Roots of Soul

How the music of the Sixties was born in the Fifties

SOUL BECAME the black sound of the Sixties, and grew to have emotional and political as well as musical implications. But it came out of the various musical styles of Fifties America, out of the interaction of different forms, different singers and different commercial pressures.

Three musical streams ran together to produce soul: jazz, the blues and gospel. These three, the basic musical forms of Black America, might loosely be described as an art music, a social music and a religious music, but they were all part of a common national heritage. Regional styles might differ, but jazz, blues and gospel could be heard in all black communities. Jazz and blues provided form and the beat; gospel gave soul its voice.



Jazz lays it down

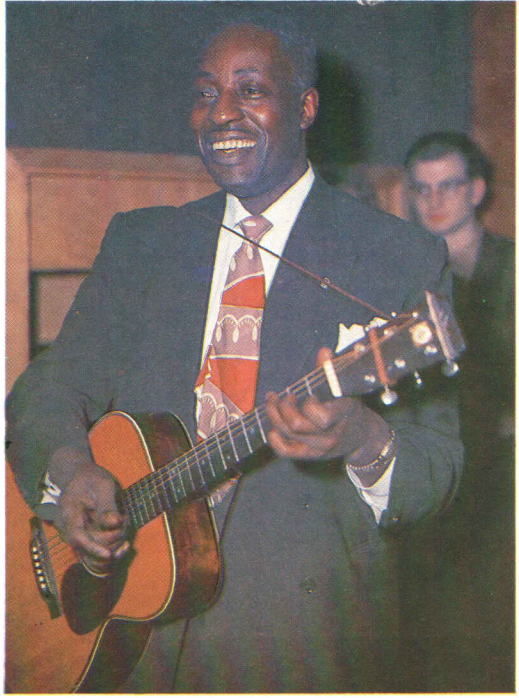
Jazz was taking off in 1945, reaching new heights of technical excellence and expressive force in the achievements of the bop pioneers led by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Over the next 20 years it was to expand its horizons still further, from the 'cool' sounds introduced by Miles Davis through to the intense, aggressive explorations of John Coltrane and Cecil Taylor. This expansion was unparalleled in any other improvised music, and had far-reaching effects.

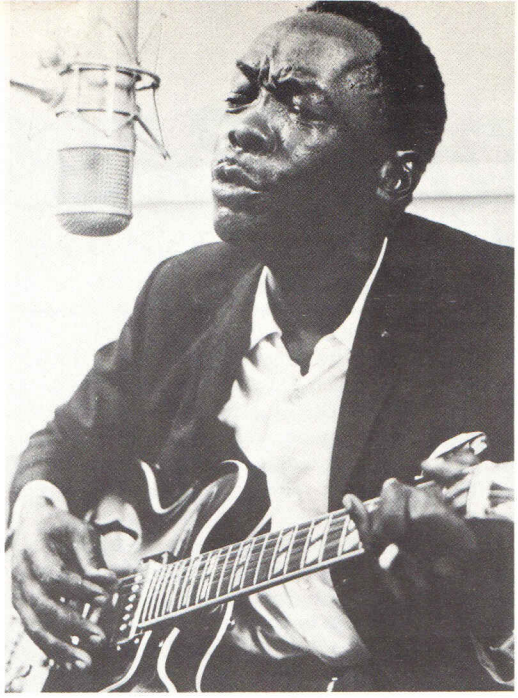
First of all, the vigorous expansion of jazz included, alongside the search for new means of expression, a reworking of traditional elements. As adjectives, 'soul' and 'funk' were first used to describe a jazz style, one that involved the employment of simpler blues and gospel patterns and heavier rhythms to achieve a more gutsy feel in reaction to the less direct approach and increasingly complex chord sequences of much Fifties jazz. The typical soul tunes of the Sixties owed much to this combination of blues and gospel sequences, which was typified by the compositions of pianists Horace Silver and Bobby Timmons.

The search for more intense forms of expression via simpler harmonies was a characteristic shared by most of the progressive black jazz musicians of the late Fifties. It was

The varied musical traditions which gave birth to soul included gospel, a religious music of enormous fervour (left, the Abyssinian Baptist choir in action), but the self-conscious explorations of the jazz pioneers were also important – from Charlie Parker (alto) and Miles Davis (trumpet) in the Forties (inset below) to the avant-garde pianist Cecil Taylor (below) who came to prominence with an uncompromising, aggressive style in the early Sixties.

The developing blues styles were an essential ingredient of soul. Big Bill Broonzy (right) was one of the musicians who gave a rural music an urban sound. John Lee Hooker (far right) carried on the process of amplifying instruments and increasing the music's toughness and volume as one of Detroit's most important bluesmen.



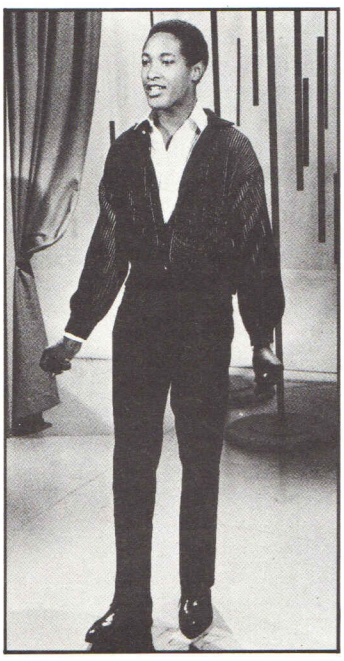


passed directly on to more popular forms of music in the person of Ray Charles, talented jazz pianist and sax player as well as a great singer.

Jazz had another impact, too, in its position as a musical vanguard. Its great musicians were respected worldwide; they provided an example of continuing excellence which gave young instrumentalists something to emulate, but, more important, they were a source of black musical self-respect. Musicians like bass player Charlie Mingus or pianist Cecil Taylor were self-conscious artists working in their own people's tradition. Then, too, many of these musicians were prepared to invest in the future of the black music community: Dizzy Gillespie's Dee Gee record label played a part in the early careers of both Jackie Wilson and Little Willie John.

Meanwhile the blues too was changing, moving into the heavier sounds of electrified urban music and including the belting rhythms of R&B. The innovations of the Forties and Fifties, from B. B. King and John Lee Hooker to the impassioned Chicago sounds of men like Buddy Guy, marked an extension of an earlier tradition which inevitably left its mark on the singers who were to provide the sounds of early soul.

Soul singers re-appraised their role as black artists: Sam Cooke (below), cool and hip, would never have clowned around in the manner of Louis Jordan (below right).



Power from the church

Certainly, however, the most direct influence on soul as a vocal style came from gospel. The development of gospel quartets in the Forties and Fifties, for example, provided many of the mannerisms that became the distinctive soul sound. The Soul Stirrers, with the distinctive voice of R. H. Harris as lead tenor, and the Dixie Hummingbirds, a group featuring Ira Tucker, were particularly important. As lead singer with the Dominoes and the early Drifters, Clyde McPhatter built on these foundations to consolidate many of the particular elements that were later to become standard – the bending and twisting of notes around a single syllable and the intensity of voice to invest the banal lyrics of popular songs with immense power.

Apart from the musical elements, there were two other factors that gave birth to soul. The first was the sheer ability of the singers. Ray Charles' tremendously moving way with a song was given its edge by his talent for bringing together disparate styles. Jackie Wilson and Sam Cooke had magnificent, supple voices, able to turn the gospel they grew up with into something related, but different. Willie John was an aggressive tenor, able to ride over the banked instrumentation which became one of the characteristics of soul arrangements.

The second factor lay in the situation of the black population itself. During the Fifties, it was becoming more aware, more powerful, more determined. In the early Sixties, a star like Sam Cooke was cool and proud – he never clowned around like Louis Jordan and other stars of an earlier period. The change was not just in pose: both Charles and Cooke became black entrepreneurs, determined to be more powerful than mere performers. This was perhaps the catalyst that accelerated the reaction between the musical styles. Soul was black music – and black music that was proud of its origins.

ASHLEY BROWN

BROTHER RAY

The limitless genius of Ray Charles

'Now it's important that you understand,' says Ray Charles in his autobiography *Brother Ray*, 'that there were three things I never wanted to own when I was a kid: a dog, a cane, and a guitar. In my brain they all meant blindness and helplessness. It seemed like every blind singer I'd heard about was playing the guitar. It wasn't that I wanted to fool myself. Hell, I knew I was as blind as a bat. But, I didn't want to go around limping like I was half dead. I didn't want to depend on anyone or anything other than myself.'

He was born Ray Charles Robinson on 23 September 1930 in the small town of Albany, Georgia, though he moved to Greenville, Florida, a few months later. He hardly knew his father, Bailey Robinson, who was married to a woman named Mary Jane; Ray was the result of an affair Bailey had with a woman by the name of Aretha. He was raised by both Aretha and Mary Jane – Bailey subsequently went off and married another woman.

Tragedy struck the young Ray Charles repeatedly. When Ray was five, he saw his younger brother accidentally drown in a washtub. Shortly after that he started going blind, probably from glaucoma. At seven, he left the security of his small town to be shipped off to the segregated state-run school for the blind in St Augustine, where he remained until his teenage years. He had already displayed a keen interest in music, thanks to a neighbour who played boogie-woogie and encouraged the child to play on his piano. At the school Ray learned braille and a predictable amount of cane weaving, but he also spent a lot of spare time in music rooms, hanging out with older boys in bands and listening to the radio and records. It was at school that Ray furthered his piano studies, and also learned to play the organ, clarinet, alto sax and trumpet.

At home, during summer breaks, his mother encouraged him to be independent: Ray did household chores like chopping wood and washing the floors. He also rode a bicycle and (amazingly) a motorcycle, despite protests of concern from neighbours.

Florida to Seattle

When he was 15 his mother died suddenly and Ray decided to quit both Greenville and school. He went down to Jacksonville, Florida, to stay with friends of friends, and there decided to make a living using his ability on piano and clarinet. He played in several local bands and even did a brief stint with a white hillbilly band, the Florida Playboys. Ray found the country style easy to accommodate since he had been listening to country music on the 'Grand Ole Opry' radio show from childhood. Having tested his semi-independence in Florida, Ray decided to move on; he headed as far from the state as the geography of continental America allowed, and in 1947 landed cross-country in Seattle, Washington.

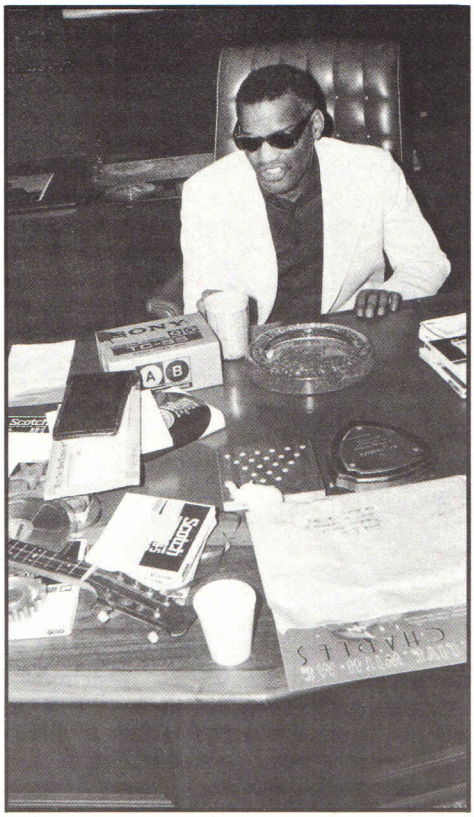
There, as in Florida, the place was full of musicians. Not only was Ray a talented multi-instrumentalist, he was also an able big-band arranger and he had no trouble picking up work in night spots like the Black and Tan, the Rocking Chair and the Elks Club. For his club gigs he formed the McSon Trio consisting of Gosady McGee (guitar), Milt Garred (bass) with Ray on piano. The atmosphere was one of sophistication and Ray began emulating the smooth styles of Nat King Cole and Charles Brown of Johnny Moore's Three Blazers. The jump jive of Louis Jordan was also an influence.

In 1949 Ray took the professional name of Ray Charles (to avoid confusion with the boxer Sugar Ray Robinson) and moved down to Los Angeles to make his first attempt at recording. Signed to Jack Lauderdale's Oakland-based Downbeat record label (later renamed Swing Time), he cut a number called 'Confession Blues'. It sounded like a Nat King Cole record, and Charles was proud of his vocal similarity to Cole. 'Confession Blues' was a financial setback, however, because it was recorded during a musicians' strike and Charles was fined 600 dollars.

Undaunted, Charles continued recording with the help of the musicians from the bands of Nat King Cole and Johnny Moore. This was one of the happiest periods of his life, and Charles has described himself as being 'in hog heaven'. He was also in love with a girl from Florida called Louise, who bore him his first son, Evelyn. Like other jazz musicians of the period, Charles became part of the hard-drugs scene; this was the beginning of a lengthy heroin habit.

Early in 1950 Charles cut 'Baby Let Me Hold Your Hand', his first hit record, which reached Number 7 in the R&B

Below left: Discussing a take at the mixing desk. Charles' ABC contract secured him complete artistic control. Below: The trappings of success.



charts the following year. He also joined up with blues singer Lowell Fulson's road band and got his first taste of the touring life. Travelling allowed him to get to know fellow musicians including his idol Charles Brown, Quincy Jones (an old Seattle acquaintance) and gospel singers the Swan Silvertones. Touring provided Charles with much-needed experience, opening up new avenues to the young musician and he now began to tire of his role as a supper-club pianist in the Nat King Cole tradition. Nonetheless he had still to find his own style.

Meanwhile, Swing Time was in serious financial trouble and Ray Charles' contract was sold for 2500 dollars to the fledgling Atlantic label. Based in New York, Charles went solo and did a few sessions in 1952 and 1953. This produced the boogie-woogie number 'Mess Around', a blues number called 'Losing Hand' and a novelty number called 'It Should Have Been Me' which reached Number 7 in the R&B chart in 1954. Ray described the period: 'I still didn't have my own band yet. Most of the songs and charts were not mine; Jesse Stone, who worked for Atlantic, wrote the arrangements.' Charles felt uncomfortable in New York; the Atlantic tradition of close studio control of its artists did not suit his style. He was not a singer to be moulded into the required shape by the house producer.

Burnin' blues

In 1953 Charles left the urban tensions of Manhattan for New Orleans and spent a good deal of time with bluesman Guitar Slim. Charles arranged, and was pianist, during a set of sessions that produced 'The Things I Used To Do', a blues classic that became a million-seller for Slim. The loose working atmosphere of New Orleans and the raw power of Guitar Slim liberated Charles from the inhibitions of the West Coast supper-club style. On 'The Things I Used To Do' riffing horns accompanied the singer Eddie Jones' emotionally charged delivery, a foretaste of the later Ray Charles synthesis of blues, jazz and gospel.

The first example of the blend was Charles' own 'Don't You Know', cut in New Orleans. A further session produced a Guitar Slim composition, 'Feelin' Sad'. But both these sessions were merely preparation for a third spell in the recording studio, in a radio station in Atlanta, which produced the legendary 'I Got A Woman' (1954).

For this recording Charles had his own band. The usual line-up was drummer Teagle Fleming, bassist Edgar Willis, David 'Fathead' Newman on alto and tenor, baritone saxman Bennie Crawford and trumpeters John Hunt and Marcus

Above left: The Raelettes, whose ranks have included such notable singers as Merry Clayton and Clydie King. Left: Ray Charles' multi-instrumental talents include the alto saxophone.

Belgrave. The guitar sound of the earlier blues records was pushed back in favour of the piano. But most important was Charles' voice. In 'I Got A Woman' the sound was not supper-club sophistication, it was raw, raspy and free. And the keyboards did not tinkle, they *burned*. 'I Got A Woman' set the pace for Ray Charles for the next few years.

Charles brought gospel out from the church and into the secular world, through the use of his gospel-based piano figures, by the answer vocals provided by his female singers (the Raelettes) and by transforming the songs themselves, from the sacred to the profane: 'This Little Light Of Mine' became 'This Little Girl Of Mine' and 'Nobody But You Lord' became 'Nobody But You'.

While the sinning record-buying public was getting on its feet to dance, others were less keen. As Big Bill Broonzy lamented, 'He's got the blues, he's crying sanctified and I know that's wrong. He should be singing in the church.' The gospel celebration Ray Charles brought to 'his' music was reflected back in the sheer delirium demonstrated by his audiences. The two live LPs *Ray Charles At Newport* and *Ray Charles In Person* (recorded in Atlanta) stand as classics, featuring 'A Fool For You' and 'Drown In My Own Tears'.

Brother Ray had opened the floodgates and it wouldn't be long before James Brown, Sam Cooke and a later generation of artists like Otis Redding would follow. How much did working with Ray Charles help Atlantic launch Aretha Franklin? How much did Ray's stage showmanship get adopted and expanded by Stevie Wonder's Wonderlove or by Sly and the Family Stone? As Charles himself jests, he wouldn't be at all surprised if he heard that Joe Cocker used to sleep with his records; you cannot miss the influence.

'But I don't consider myself part of rock 'n'roll,' says Charles in his autobiography. 'I don't believe that I was among the forerunners of the music. . . . When I think of true rock'n'roll, I think of Little Richard and Bo Diddley. Kids could identify with "Tutti Frutti" a lot easier than "Drown In My Own Tears" . . . those guys sold to whites by the truckloads. Fats Domino had huge hits in the white market and I wasn't even in the same league.'

But Ray is quick to point out that he went in a direction the others did not: the jazz market. Then, it was very much the outlet for a hip white audience too old for Little Richard and too young to settle in to Sinatra. Ray Charles was the high priest of this group. He recorded two albums with Milt Jackson of the Modern Jazz Quartet, *Soul Brothers* (1958) and *Soul Meeting* (1962).

Inset above: Charles in characteristic vocal action. Left: At the piano, where Charles' gutsy blues feeling compensates more than adequately for his somewhat stylised technique.

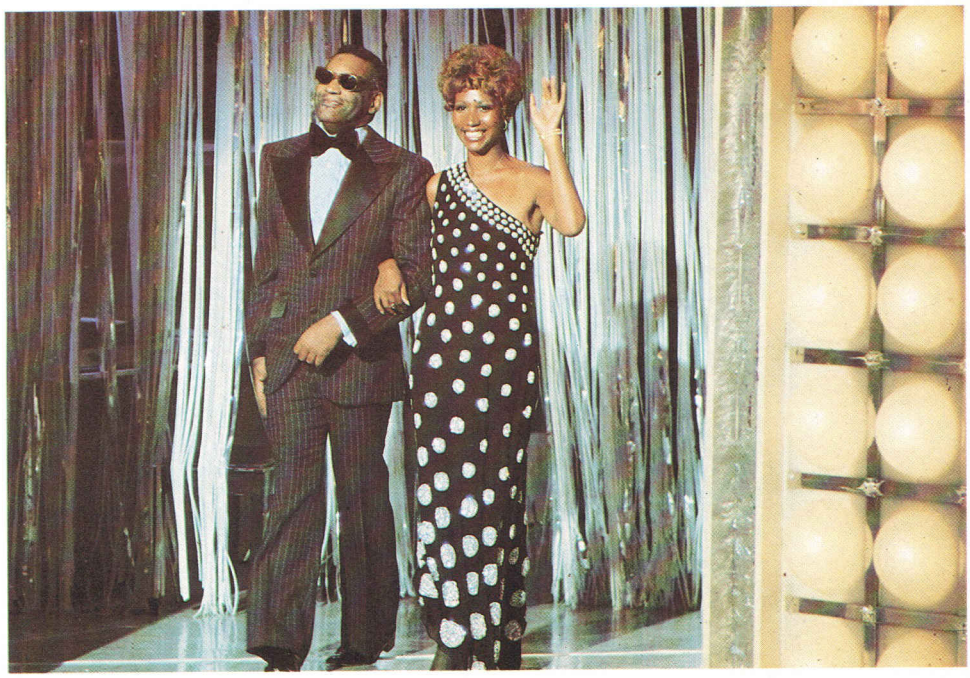
Improvising a classic

The peak of the Ray Charles sound came in 1959 with 'What'd I Say'. It fused all the Charles resources into one timeless firecracker. And, so the legend goes, it was an accident. The Ray Charles Revue had just finished playing a show one night in the Midwest but they needed to play for another 12 minutes, so Ray informed his team to follow as he improvised. Ray played, the Raelettes followed and the audience responded. Feeling the tension, Charles began to ease things down and the 'riff' became a song which was perfected over the next few nights until Charles brought his band back to New York to record the number.

'What'd I Say' crossed over from the R&B charts to the Hot Hundred and made Number 6. Despite its high chart position (the first time Charles had broken into the pop market) the provocative delivery of 'What'd I Say' ensured that it was banned in a number of places. Of the mixed reception it received, Charles commented: 'It was said to be suggestive; well, I agree. I'm not one to interpret my own songs but if you can't figure out "What'd I Say", then something's wrong.'

Next was an Atlantic album titled *The Genius of Ray Charles*, in which Charles moved in with a big band and an orchestra to do the standards that had served him so well on the road. One side of the album featured the orchestra, and the other the jazz band, arranged by Quincy Jones.

> 'In the middle of one of the numbers, the band was blasting, and Ray stopped. I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "One of those trumpets, I think it was the third, played a wrong note." I told the arranger, who said he hadn't heard it. But we had the trumpets play their parts, softly, with no rhythm section, and sure enough one of them had a wrong note there – probably copied down wrong. Ray had such an understanding of music. I'd never seen anything like it. He would be making changes all the time, dictating all the chord changes, everything that was needed to incorporate his suggestion. A complete musician.'
>
> **Nesuhi Ertegun**, co-producer of *The Genius Of Ray Charles*



Above: Brother Ray introduces the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin. The duo recorded some award-winning commercials for US television in the late Sixties which Charles ranks among his favourite work. Below: Charles in custody in 1961 after being charged with possession of heroin. The charges were later dismissed on a technicality, although the singer's drug habit continued.

At the end of 1959 Ray Charles left Atlantic and signed a deal with ABC Records which gave him a big up-front advance and the same degree of artistic freedom he eventually enjoyed at Atlantic. The early Sixties was, from the commercial point of view, Charles' most successful period and he achieved his first Hot Hundred Number 1 with the old Hoagy Carmichael standard 'Georgia On My Mind' in 1960.

The commercial success Charles enjoyed at ABC was matched by a change of song material, away from gospel and R&B towards country and western. In 1962 he released *Modern Sounds In Country And Western*, which sold over one million copies and contained the Hank Williams classic, 'I Can't Stop Loving You' (which when released as a single in 1962 was a smash hit Number 1, selling some three million copies). This move to country came as a great surprise to many of his old fans but, as Charles explained, it was merely an extension of his childhood interest in the 'Grand Ole Opry'.

The early Sixties saw a succession of hits which included 'Hit The Road Jack' (a 1961 Number 1), 'You Don't Know Me' (Number 2, 1962), 'You Are My Sunshine' (Number 7, 1962), 'Take These Chains From My Heart' (Number 8, 1963) and 'Busted' (Number 4, 1963).

Taking care of business

Ray Charles pulled away from the front line in 1964 as the Beatles invaded America. A series of minor drug busts ended in a major arrest in 1964. Charles checked himself into the St Francis Hospital outside Los Angeles and kicked a lengthy addiction to heroin; he later claimed it was harder to give up cigarettes than the heroin habit. He was put on probation but by 1966 was back in the business of making music. 'Crying Time' and 'Let's Go Get Stoned' gave him hits in 1965 and 1966.

Unlike many of his contemporaries Charles had taken care of business. In 1962 he founded his own label, Tangerine Records, which was distributed by ABC until 1969 when he split from them. Charles' business empire included Ray Charles Enterprises, Crossover Records, two publishing companies and a business supply company.

During the mid Sixties Charles moved into the field of cabaret-style entertainment. The old gospel fervour was made safe by heavenly choirs and bland arrangements as Charles turned towards Beatles tunes and showtime standards for his recorded output.

But Ray Charles has survived trials which would have broken so many others: blindness, poverty, racial barriers, drugs, broken marriages and the ever-fickle taste of the record-buying public. He created a musical revolution by exposing his own back garden of influence. And unlike too many revolutionaries, Charles has at least had the pleasure of living long enough to enjoy the due recognition and respect of those he has influenced.

ROBIN KATZ

RAY CHARLES
Discography (to 1977)

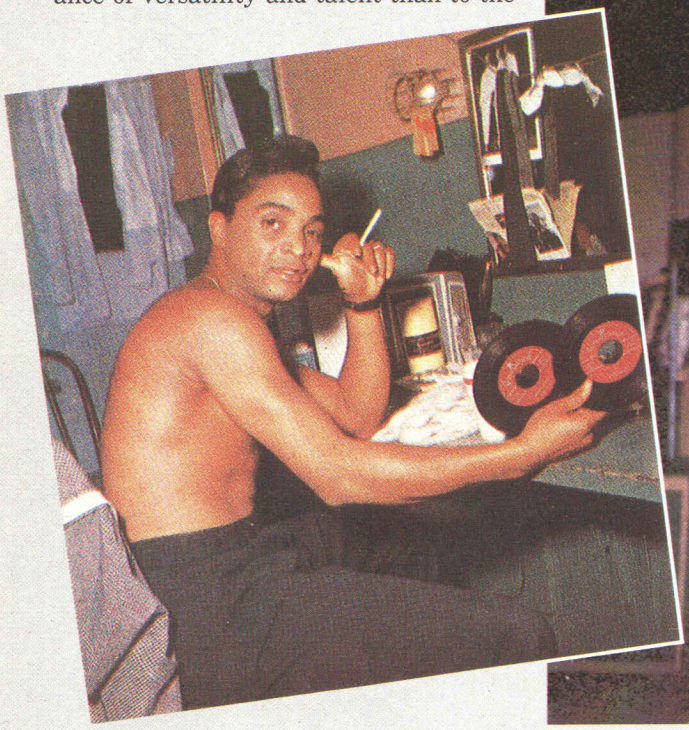
Singles
Confession Blues/I Love You, I Love You (Downbeat 171, 1949); Blues Before Sunrise/How Long Blues (Downbeat 178, 1949); A Sentimental Fool/You'll Always Miss The Matter (Downbeat 179, 1949); Alone In This City/Can't Anyone Ask For More (Swingtime 211, 1949); Let's Have A Ball/Rockin' Chair Blues (Swingtime 212, 1949). I've Had My Fun/Sittin' On Top Of The World (Swingtime 215, 1949); Ain't That Fine/Don't Put Your Dreams All In One Basket (Swingtime 216, 1949); C.C. Rider/What Have I Done (Swingtime 217, 1949); Honey, Honey/She's In The Ball (Swingtime 218, 1949); Late In The Afternoon Blues/The Ego Song (Swingtime 228, 1950); I'll Do Anything But Work/Someday (Swingtime 229, 1950); All To Myself/I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now (Swingtime 249, 1951); Baby Let Me Hold Your Hand/Lonely Boy (Swingtime 250, 1951); Kiss-A-Me Baby/I'm Glad For Your Sake (Swingtime 274, 1951); Hey Now/Baby Won't You Please Come Home (Swingtime 297, 1952); Guitar Blues/Baby Let Me Hear You Call My Name (Swingtime 300, 1952); Misery In My Heart/The Snow Is Falling (Swingtime 326, 1953); Guitar Blues/Baby Let Me Hear You Call My Name (Sittin-In-With 641, 1952); I Can't Do No More/Roly Poly (Sittin-In-With 651, 1952); Walkin' And Talkin' To Myself/I'm Wonderin' And Wonderin' (Rockin 504, 1952). Roll With My Baby/The Midnight Hour (Atlantic 976, 1953); Sun's Gonna Shine Again/Jumpin' In The Morning (Atlantic 984, 1953); Mess Around/Funny (Atlantic 999, 1953); Heartbreaker/Feelin' Sad (Atlantic 1008, 1954); It Should've Been Me/Sinner's Prayer (Atlantic 1021, 1954); Don't You Know/Losing Hand (Atlantic 1050, 1954); I've Got A Woman/Come Back (Atlantic 1050, 1955); This Little Girl Of Mine/A Fool For You (Atlantic 1063, 1955); Black Jack/Green Backs (Atlantic 1076, 1955); Drown In My Own Tears/Mary Ann (Atlantic 1085, 1956); Hallelujah, I Love Her So/What Would I Do Without You (Atlantic 1096, 1956); Lonely Avenue/Leave My Woman Alone (Atlantic 1108, 1956); Ain't That Love/I Want To Know (Atlantic 1124, 1957); It's All Right/Get On The Right Track Baby (Atlantic 1143, 1957); Swanee River Rock/I Want A Little Girl (Atlantic 1154, 1957); Talkin' 'Bout You/What Kind Of Man Are You (Atlantic 1172, 1958); Yes In Deed/I Had A Dream (Atlantic 1180, 1958); You Be My Baby/My Bonnie (Atlantic 1196, 1958); Rock House Pt 1/Rock House Pt 2 (Atlantic 2006, 1958); The Right Time/Tell All The World About You (Atlantic 2010, 1959); That's Enough/Tell Me How You Feel (Atlantic 2023, 1959); What'd I Say [Pt 1] What'd I Say [Pt 2] (Atlantic 2031, 1959); I'm Movin On/I Believe To My Soul (Atlantic 2043, 1959); Let The Good Times Roll/Don't Let The Sun Catch You Cryin' (Atlantic 2047, 1960); Just For A Thrill/Heartbreaker (Atlantic 2055, 1960); Tell The Truth/Sweet Sixteen (Atlantic 2068, 1960); Come Rain Or Come Shine/Tell Me You'll Wait For Me (Atlantic 2084, 1960); Early In The Morning/A Bit Of Soul (Atlantic 2094, 1960); Am I Blue?/It Should've Been Me (Atlantic 2106, 1960); Hard Times/I Wonder Who (Atlantic 2118, 1960); Carrying That Load/Feelin' Sad (Atlantic 2174, 1962); Talkin' Bout You/In A Little Spanish Town (Atlantic 2239, 1963); I Found My Baby/Guitar Blues (Time 1026, 1960); Back Home/Why Did You Go (Time 1054, 1962); One Mint Julep/Let's Go (Impulse 200, 1961); I've Got News For You/I'm Gonna Move To The Outskirts of Town (Impulse 202, 1961); C. C. Rider/I Used To Be So Happy (Baronet 7111, 1962/3); Who You Gonna Love/My Baby (ABC Paramount 10081, 1960); Sticks And Stones/Worried Life Blues (ABC Paramount 10118, 1960); Georgia On My Mind/Carry Me Back To Old Virginny (ABC Paramount 10135, 1960); Them That Got/I Wonder (ABC Paramount 10141, 1960); Ruby/Hard-Hearted Hannah (ABC Paramount 10164, 1960); Hit The Road Jack/The Danger Zone (ABC Paramount 10244, 1961); Unchain My Heart/But On The Other Hand, Baby (ABC Paramount 10266, 1961); Baby It's Cold Outside/We'll Be Together Again (ABC Paramount 10298, 1962); Hide Nor Hair/At The Club (ABC Paramount 10314, 1962); I Can't Stop Loving You/Born To Lose (ABC Paramount 10330, 1962); You Don't Know Me/Careless Love (ABC Paramount 10345, 1962); You Are My Sunshine/Your Cheating Heart (ABC Paramount 10375, 1963); Don't Set Me Free/Brightest Smile In Town (ABC Paramount 10405, 1963); Take These Chains From My Heart/No Letter Today (ABC Paramount 10435, 1963); No One/Without Love (There Is Nothing) (ABC Paramount 10453, 1963); Busted/Make Believe (ABC Paramount 10481, 1963); That Lucky Old Sun/Ol' Man Time (ABC Paramount 10509, 1963); My Heart Cries/Baby Don't You Cry (ABC Paramount 10530, 1964); My Baby Don't Dig Me/Something's Wrong (ABC Paramount 10557, 1964); A Tear Fell/No One To Cry To (ABC Paramount 10571, 1964); Smack Dab In The Middle/I Wake Up Crying (ABC Paramount 10588, 1964); Makin' Whoopee (voc)/Makin' Whoopee (inst) (ABC Paramount 10609, 1964); Cry/Teardrops From My Eyes (ABC Paramount 10615, 1965); I Got A Woman Pt 1/I Got A Woman Pt 2 (ABC Paramount 10649, 1965); Without A Song Pt 1/Without A Song Pt 2 (ABC Paramount 10663, 1965); I'm A Fool To Care/Love's Gonna Live Here (ABC Paramount 10700, 1965); The Cincinnati Kid/Thats All I Am To You (ABC Paramount 10720, 1965); Crying Time/When My Dream Boat Comes Home (ABC Paramount 10739, 1965); Together Again/You're Just About To Lose Your Clown (ABC Paramount 10785, 1966); Let's Go Get Stoned/The Train (ABC Paramount 10808, 1966); I Choose To Sing The Blues/Hopelessly (ABC Paramount 10840, 1966); I Don't Need No Doctor/Please Say You're Fooling (ABC Paramount 10865, 1966); I Want To Talk About You/Please Say You're Fooling (ABC Paramount 10901, 1967); Here We Go Again/Somebody Ought To Write A Book About Me (ABC Paramount 10938, 1967); In The Heat Of The Night/Something's Got To Change (ABC Paramount 10970, 1967); Yesterday/Never Had Enough Of Nothing Yet (ABC Paramount 11009, 1967); That's A Lie/Go On Home (ABC Paramount 11045, 1968); Eleanor Rigby/Understanding (ABC Paramount 11090, 1968); Sweet Young Thing Like You/Listen, They're Playing Our Song (ABC Paramount 11133, 1968); If It Wasn't For Bad Luck/When I Stop Dreaming (ABC Paramount 11170, 1968); I'll Be Your Servant/I Didn't Know What Time It Was (ABC Paramount 11193, 1969); Let Me Love You/I'm Satisfied (ABC Paramount 11213, 1969); We Can Make It/Baby I Can't Stop Loving You (ABC Paramount 11239, 1969); Claudie Mae/Someone To Watch Over Me (ABC Paramount 11251, 1969); Laughin' And Clownin'/That Thing Called Love (ABC Paramount 11259, 1970); If You Were Mine/Till I Can't Take It Anymore (ABC Paramount 11271, 1970); Dont Change On Me/Sweet Memories (ABC Paramount 11291, 1971); Feel So Bad/Your Love Is So Doggone Good (ABC Paramount 11308, 1971); What Am I Living For/Tired Of My Tears (ABC Paramount 11317, 1971); Look What They've Done To My Song, Ma/America The Beautiful (ABC Paramount 11329, 1971); Hey Mister/There'll Be No Peace Without All Men As One (ABC Paramount 11337, 1972); Every Saturday Night/Take Me Home Country Roads (ABC Paramount 11344, 1972); I Can Make It Through The Days/Ring Of Fire (ABC Paramount 11351, 1973); Come Live With Me/Everybody Sing (Crossover 973, 1973); Louise/Somebody (Crossover 974, 1974); Living For The City/Then We'll Be Home (Crossover 981, 1975); America The Beautiful/Sunshine (Crossover 985, 1976); Oh Lawd, I'm On My Way/Oh Bess, Where's My Bess (RCA 10800, 1976); I Can See Clearly/Anonymous Love (Atlantic 3443, 1977).

Albums (selective)
Rock'n'Roll (Atlantic LP8006); *What'd I Say* (Atlantic LP8029); *Ray Charles At Newport* (Atlantic LP1289); *The Genius Of Ray Charles* (Atlantic SD1312); *Fabulous* (Hollywood 505); *Genius Hits The Road* (ABC Paramount 335); *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music* (ABC Paramount 410); *The Best Of Ray Charles* (Atlantic SD1543).

HOT GOSPEL

Jackie Wilson's voice smashed musical barriers

ALTHOUGH HE MANAGED to have more than 50 hit singles in the US Hot Hundred during a solo career spanning 20 years, Jackie Wilson somehow failed to establish a lasting international reputation. The reason is due, perhaps, more to an abundance of versatility and talent than to the lack of such qualities. With an output ranging from quasi-operatic ballads to gritty, belting dance favourites, Wilson cast his net too wide to capture the full commercial potential of any one element.



Pictured in the dressing room (left) with two of his many hit singles, Jackie Wilson's on-stage charisma was undeniable (above). He was often mobbed by frenzied fans at his shows.

Jack Leroy Wilson was born in Detroit, Michigan, on 9 June 1934. He was raised in the Motor City and, as a young teenager, had aspirations to be a top-class boxer. He won the amateur Golden Gloves welterweight title in 1950, having declared a false age in order to qualify. He didn't talk about his subsequent short-lived professional boxing career. 'Every time word of it appears, someone takes a poke at me,' he once said. 'I keep backing away, saying I never could fight.' He won only two of his ten professional fights and is not to be confused with the famous boxer of the same name who fought Sugar Ray Robinson in the Forties.

Wilson sang spirituals and gospel in church, and his performing career began with the Ever Ready Gospel Singers. A move to the secular field followed swiftly with a 1951 recording session for Dee Gee Records, the label owned by jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. The only song Jackie could recall singing at that session was the standard 'Danny Boy', a showcase for his vibrant tenor delivery and flowing upper-register notes, with which he had won all the talent contests he'd entered. After this early solo venture, Wilson had a spell with the vocal group the Thrillers, whose personnel included Sonny Woods and Hank Ballard (both soon to become founders of the Royals, who were later known as the Midnighters).

In 1951 Jackie also appeared at Detroit's Paradise Theatre where Johnny Otis hosted a talent contest. Wilson didn't win but Billy Ward of the Dominoes took his phone number. Ward, whose group was very popular because of massive hits like 'Sixty Minute Man' and 'Have Mercy Baby' – the latter featuring the gospel-drenched crying lead of Clyde McPhatter – rang Wilson a year later.

Playing with the Dominoes

Wilson joined the Dominoes for tours, finally becoming lead singer when Clyde McPhatter left. 'I fell in love with the man's voice,' said Wilson. 'I watched Clyde and listened.' He listed his other major influences as Al Jolson, the Dixie Hummingbirds, Louis Jordan, the Mills Brothers and the Ink Spots.

Jackie sang lead or second-tenor with the group for nearly four years, during which time they recorded a prodigious quantity of material for King-Federal. Wilson sang lead on songs like 'Three Coins In The Fountain' and 'Rags To Riches', his dominant voice displaying more melisma than on his later solo dramatic ballads. In contrast, he was often almost unrecognisable on the jump

tunes for which he adopted a rasping, shouting delivery. 'Learning The Blues' and 'You Can't Keep A Good Man Down' display a style he seldom repeated during his solo career, when he usually varied between mid-high tenor and falsetto.

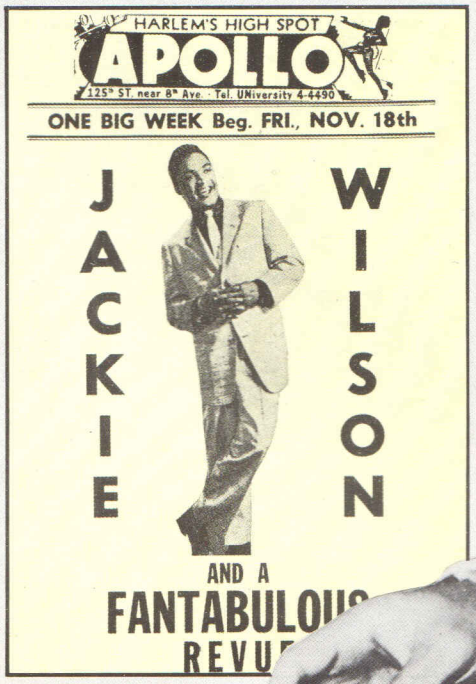
The Dominoes moved from King to Decca in mid-1956, and Wilson remained with them for a short while before leaving in search of solo fame. He gigged around Detroit, getting bookings on the strength of his reputation with the group. Al Green, who managed Johnnie Ray, LaVern Baker and Detroit's Flame Show Bar where Wilson appeared, eventually took over his management from Billy Ward and placed him with Brunswick under the supervision of Dick Jacobs, the house orchestra-leader. Shortly afterwards Green died, leaving Wilson's management to his office-boy-cum-assistant Nat Tarnopol.

'Reet Petite' (1957) was Jackie's first disc on Brunswick. It was a jaunty rocker written by ex-boxer Berry Gordy Jr and Billy Davis, Wilson's cousin who wrote under the name of Tyran Carlo. This partnership was responsible for writing Wilson's first six hits and they flew to New York to help supervise the dates. Berry Gordy, who subsequently founded Tamla-Motown, learnt his craft at these early sessions.

Brunswick's big band

Wilson's material varied between uptempo items (though not really mainstream rock'n'roll) and dramatic ballads, generally accompanied by the Dick Jacobs Orchestra and Chorus. Jacobs' direction seemed squarely rooted in the big-band tradition of the Forties; his arrangements were hardly 'tight', and the often syrupy arrangements seethed with blaring, fuzzy-edged brass crescendos and cloying strings. The vocal choruses would have been more at home in Hollywood musical movies, but the sheer quality, power and dynamism of Jackie's soaring tenor voice usually managed to dominate proceedings, and the records of this period achieved healthy sales.

Hit followed hit, from the near-operatic balladry of 'To Be Loved' (1958), vocally reminiscent of his leads on the Dominoes' standards, through the rock ballads 'Lonely Teardrops' (Number 7 in *Billboard*'s



Above left: The Sings The Blues *album featured 'Doggin' Around', a 1960 hit single. Above: Billy Ward and his Dominoes, with the young Jackie Wilson seated right. Below left: Harlem's Apollo Theatre, a renowned showcase for black acts, featured Wilson for a whole week. Below: Attacking a new number in the studio.*

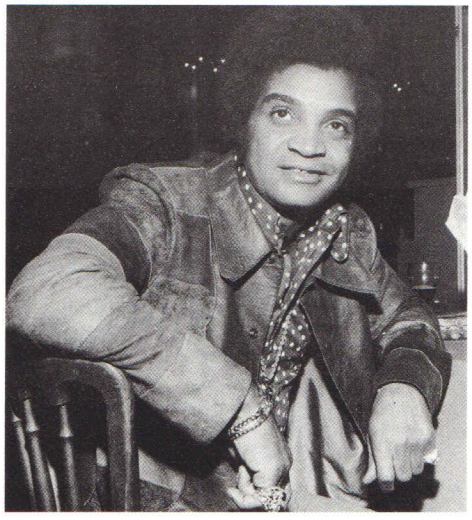
Hot Hundred in 1959) and 'Night' (Number 4 in 1960) to the brisk beat of 'You Better Know It' and 'Talk That Talk' (both 1959) and the bluesy 'Doggin' Around' (1960). These matched chart honours with ballads like 'A Woman, A Lover, A Friend' and 'The Tear Of The Year' in 1960-61. Wilson was also being eased towards the middle of the road in musical terms via a host of albums combining token hits with armfuls of Tin Pan Alley standards. These grab-bags had titles such as *At The Copa, You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet* and *Jackie Wilson Sings The World's Greatest Melodies*.

During 1961 Wilson was shot and seriously injured by a female fanatic. 'It nearly put me away for good. It took some time, some good doctors and a lot of help from the man upstairs before I got out of hospital.'

Several of Wilson's songs of this period had interesting origins. 'Alone At Last' was an adaptation of a theme by Tchaikovsky, and 'My Empty Arms', originally titled 'On With The Motley', came from Leoncavallo's opera *I Pagliacci*. 'Night', the other side of 'Doggin' Around' and his biggest-selling single, was also derived from opera, this time from Saint-Saëns' *Samson And Delilah*.

The early Sixties brought a necessary stylistic adjustment from black pop music to the emergent sophistication of 'soul'. For a while the Brunswick label resisted the change, and Wilson cut ravers like 'Baby Workout' (which reached Number 5), 'Baby Get It' and 'Shake, Shake, Shake' (all 1963) and 'Big Boss Line' (1964). The first two combined gospelly call-and-response vocals with dated but wildly-swinging big-band arrangements; 'Boss' merged blues and gospel, and 'Shake' attempted to include too much of everything and resulted in frantic cacophony.

By mid-1964 the winds of change had finally reached Brunswick. 'Squeeze Her, Tease Her' mirrored Motown's methods in combining 12-bar blues chord progression with gospel fervour and 'No Pity (In The Naked City)' opened the doors of soul balladry to Wilson's efforts. The following years yielded a succession of hits in mainstream soul style, as discs like 'Whispers' (1966) and 'Higher And Higher' (1967) restored Jackie's name to the international charts.



Top: Wilson leaves hospital with his mother and wife after the shooting incident of 1961. Above: Out of the spotlight.

West to Chicago

The key factors in this resurgence were a relocation of Wilson's recording activities from New York to Chicago, the ideas of Chicago arrangers and producers like Carl Davis, Sonny Sanders and Willie Henderson, and material by successful soul writers such as Van McCoy and Eugene Record. The emphasis was placed on danceable yet ear-catching songs, although Jackie also included some 'standard' balladry in his album output.

The formula had lost its commercial impact by the early Seventies and the hits became fewer. Wilson began experimenting with new writers and material, and 1972 saw the release of a musically reasonable but commercially disastrous LP of songs by Jeffrey Perry. His last album, *Nowstalgia*, was a tribute to Al Jolson.

It has been said that Wilson's energetic stage act of the mid Fifties influenced the emergent Elvis Presley. 'I'd have to say that I got as much from him as he got from me,' said Wilson. But on his first visits to the UK some 20 years later he had adopted a more mature image befitting the songs he was singing. In concert he would stroll on stage, drawing nonchalantly on a cigarette, jacket slung casually over one shoulder – then he would command the entire auditorium from the solitary mikestand, easing back a pace or two to deliver notes with the full capacity of his lungs. In a more intimate club atmosphere the presentation was scaled down and, although hardly physically energetic, it was nonetheless dynamic.

Jackie Wilson said goodbye to the US Hot Hundred towards the end of 1973, when the crass, near-vaudeville 'Sing A Little Song' struggled into the bottom of the soul listings. A subsequent British release, 'Don't Burn No Bridges' with the Chi-Lites in vocal support, was of little genuine note. Brunswick Records and Wilson's manager, both with a mixed reputation in the business, were slow to promote his career and internal conflicts contributed to his often uninspired records. Wilson relied upon rock revival shows to earn a living while reaping royalties from British reissues of his uptempo soul hits.

His influence is hard to measure, but Van Morrison has placed his firm approbation on record. Wilson's emergence was concurrent with cry-blues comparables like Roy Brown and Billy Wright, and his vocal power and quality have since remained unrivalled.

On 29 September 1975 at the Latin Casino in Camden, New Jersey, where he was appearing with Dick Clark's revue, Jackie Wilson suffered a heart attack, hit his head as he fell, and lapsed into a coma. He was taken to Cherry Hill Medical Centre where severe brain damage was ascribed to oxygen starvation. He emerged from the coma with his abilities almost totally impaired. Unable to walk, talk or feed himself, he attempts communication by means of sounds and by blinking his eyes.

During the past few years he has been transferred from one institution to another. Barry White contributed 10,000 dollars for his care, and the Spinners, the Asbury Jukes and others raised some 70,000 dollars through benefit concerts. It was not enough, however. As the Internal Revenue Service pursues a six-figure tax bill, his former wives bicker about his guardianship and his record company does nothing at all. Wilson, meanwhile, lies practically forgotten in a twilight limbo with little hope of recovery.

CLIVE RICHARDSON

Jackie Wilson
Recommended Listening

Jackie Wilson – 14 Hits With Billy Ward And The Dominoes (King 5007X) (Includes: You Can't Keep A Good Man Down, St Louis Blues); *My Golden Favorites* (Coral LVA 9135 [UK]) (Includes: Reet Petite, I'll Be Satisfied, That's Why (I Love You So), Lonely Teardrops).

TWISTIN' THE NIGHT AWAY

Sam Cooke: coolest operator of them all

ALONG WITH Ray Charles and Jackie Wilson, Sam Cooke was one of the most influential progenitors of modern soul music: his combination of uncompromising artistry with commercial success largely determined the sound which was to dominate black culture throughout the Sixties and early Seventies. He was born one of a family of eight in Clarksdale, Mississippi, on 2 January 1931 but was raised in Chicago, where his father Charles became a preacher in the Baptist church. By 1940 Sam had joined two of his sisters and a brother in a gospel group quaintly called the Singing Children.

In his early teens Cooke graduated to the Highway QCs under the tutelage of R. B. Robinson, then baritone singer with the Soul Stirrers, perhaps *the* outstanding gospel group of the day. This group had been formed in Texas in 1934 and represented the middle ground between jubilee singing and the wilder excesses of the sanctified church. In the early years of his career Sam Cooke was frequently on the same bill as the Soul Stirrers, the Blind Boys of Mississippi and the Pilgrim Travellers as they sweated their way round the gospel circuit. It was with the last-mentioned group that he met his future business associate and mentor, J. W. Alexander.

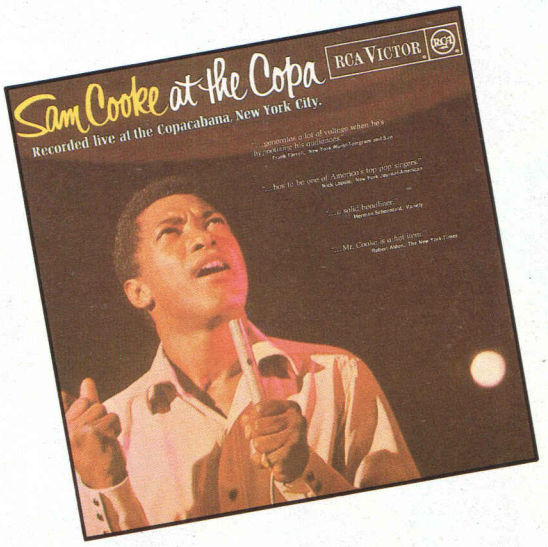
Sam sings spiritual

A genuine intimacy and respect grew between the singers working in such a specialised field, so when the Soul Stirrers' lead tenor, R. H. Harris, retired late in 1950 it was natural enough for Sam Cooke to seek his place. By then J. W. Alexander was A&R man with Specialty's gospel division and he coaxed Cooke and the Soul Stirrers to California for a session on 1 March 1951. The results were impressive enough to persuade label-owner Art Rupe of Cooke's worth.

On Thomas Dorsey's version of 'Peace In The Valley', Cooke cuts through with all the verve of a young man seizing his big chance, trading his voice against the formidable tenor of Roy Crain. Occasionally he falters and sounds momentarily thin, as on the intense jubilee of 'I'm Gonna Build On That Shore', but for the most part these first recordings reveal a supremely talented young man already aware of his potential. Indeed, listening to his Specialty output is tantamount to witnessing something of a miracle. Here's this striking young man, just into his twenties, singing and wailing righteously like he'd lived a millenium. World weary, cuffing off the sweat, and finally soaring sanctified.

All the elements of Cooke's best commercial soul style are much in evidence, not embryonic but complete in the smooth, full delivery, the tension and release of the best gospel. On 'Touch The

The face of success – a smiling Sam Cooke contemplates two of his successful RCA albums. The singer's appeal entranced both black and white audiences.



Hem Of His Garment', one of his last gospel sides, the vocal quality is exactly that of Cooke at his peak, with ad-libbing and distinctive mannerisms. Cooke seems completely fulfilled when he's feeling the spirit move and it is difficult to name anybody else, except Mavis Staples, whose gospel style is so uncompromisingly retained in their successful soul-pop recordings.

Cooke sang gospel with the Soul Stirrers until 1956 and, by the end of that period, his recordings evinced every quality for which his later secular work was widely prized. Gospel like 'Any Day Now' (1954) reveals impeccable control allied to a subtle grasp of texture and dynamics, supported by an armoury of melisma and falsetto.

Testing the pop market

It was Cooke's success as the premier heart-throb on the California gospel circuit, rather than any moral considerations, that made him apprehensive about crossing into the wicked world of popular music. Nevertheless it was at Specialty that he made his first faltering and somewhat shamefaced steps towards a rock audience. In 1956, at Nola Studios, New York, he recorded 'I'll Come Running Back To You', playing guitar and singing in a noticeably lighter voice, against a heavy-handed choral support. The first popular release for Specialty, however, was 'Lovable'/'Forever', issued in 1957 under the name Dale Cooke in order to test the market. This ruse failed to fool anyone and Sam was minus the Soul Stirrers when the second single, 'I'll Come Running Back To You', came out under his real name.

J. W. Alexander was extremely anxious to sell Cooke to black teenagers, particularly girls, and it was with that in mind that they recorded 'You Send Me' (1957) with the Bumps Blackwell Orchestra. Art Rupe was not impressed, however. Perhaps he objected to the bland sound of white vocal support or maybe he was unconvinced that the suave stylings of Cooke could reach any sort of rock'n'roll audience, black or white. Consequently 'You Send Me' was sold to Bob Keene, a West Coast businessman who owned Del-Fi and Keen Records. Chicano Ritchie Valens recorded on the first and Cooke was unleashed on the second. He hit straight away: the record went to Number 1 and finally sold two-and-a-half million copies.

'You Send Me', written by Sam's brother L. C. Cooke, was a clean, pure ballad with attractive improvisations, such as the repeated 'I know', to give a slight lyric some substance. Added to this was the winning formula of a then-hip phrase for the title, a manoeuvre Cooke was to repeat successfully later. Meanwhile, Specialty managed to go gold with 'I'll Come Running Back To You', providing Cooke with his second chart success after he had left them.

Sam Cooke's nine chart entries during his residency at Keen were largely undemanding but pleasant. 'Win Your Love For Me' (1958) flirted vaguely with suggestions of calypso rhythms of the kind that he returned to time and again throughout his career. Similarly, 'Everybody Like To Cha Cha Cha' (1959) was an indication of things to come, both in the Latin rhythm and the wry commentary concerning a girl who can't dance. As humour and narrative it looked forward to better things in 'Twistin' The Night Away' and 'Another Saturday Night'.

'Only Sixteen' in 1959 and 'Wonderful World', released in the following year, were, quite simply, slices of classic pop to put alongside 'You Send Me' as models of unpretentious craftsmanship. More important, both were beautifully calculated to cash in on the adolescent sensibilities of high-school students, black or white, while remaining attractive to an adult audience.

It would not be fair, however, to judge Sam Cooke's work at Keen simply by looking at commercially-successful singles. Some of the finest material was tucked away on albums, and the most creatively convincing moments came when he tackled standards. His ability to turn a song around and make it his own, his dextrous handling of rhythm, his musical and verbal witticisms, all mark him as a potentially great jazz stylist. When Cooke tackled 'I Cover The Waterfront', a song intimately associated with the great Billie Holiday, or Fats Waller's jaunty 'Ain't Misbehavin' ', he did so as an equal.

A family affair

The singer's move to RCA in 1960 was, in the light of this, a shrewd one. Unlike the independents, the major would not confine Cooke to R&B and was far more likely to sustain and promote his developing talent. He was free to write, which he did prolifically, and along with J. W. Alexander and Rene Hall to supervise most of his arrangements. He was also in control of his output to a large degree and, as the Sixties progressed, this was to become the aim of many black artists fired with a new pride in their race and bristling with confidence.

Sam Cooke was the ideal model: he had formed SAR Records with J. W. Alexander in 1961, the name being an amalgam of Sam and Alexander. At first the intention had been to cut gospel music, but the label soon found itself with a pop roster that embraced the Sims Twins, Mel Carter, Johnny Morisette, Johnny Taylor and the Valentinos. The last-mentioned group included Sam's longtime guitarist Bobby Womack, while a subsidiary label, Derby, gave young Billy Preston his start. Music publishing was taken care of by the Kags operation which took its name from Lou Rawls' stepfather.

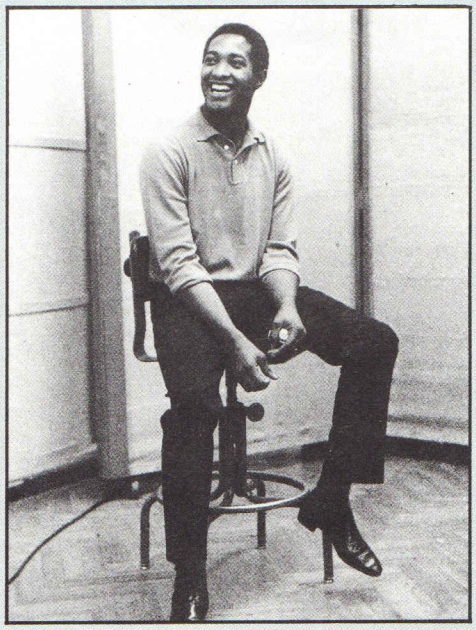
All in all it constituted a tight, lucrative 'family' and Cooke rode high, nightclubbing and enjoying the champagne high-life. That smoothly handsome face smiled out in every newspaper from a welter of flashlights, with a combination of Belafonte's sophistication and Ali's charisma. It was no accident that Sam Cooke was a firm friend of Muhammad Ali, manipulating the media and charming the women. They even beamed onto British television's 'Sportsview' together via satellite.

Cooke remained his own man at RCA. He was able to develop the soul style implicit in his work thus far and to document a black lifestyle. The first year in New York saw a precursor in 'Sad Mood' (1960); as a lyric interpretation it establishes just that and survives a dire male chorus to become a seminal soul side. 'Cupid' was a modest but much-covered hit in 1961, but the classics began in the following year with 'Twistin' The Night Away', in which Sam sang about 'A place

up New York way/Where the people are so gay', as he capitalised on the latest dance fad. Apparently he wrote the whole confection, even the line about 'The fellow in blue jeans dancing with the older queen', while innocently watching television.

'Yeah Man' (1962) anticipated the horn patterns utilised in the mid Sixties by Stax-Volt, and is the model for Arthur Conley's 'Sweet Soul Music'. Sam created the image of himself out there on the dancefloor, putting his girl through her paces and distancing himself with foxy laughs. Finally comes the gospel injunction 'I'm going home', and choir and horns take it back to church.

'Having A Party' (1962) is a classic evocation of summer and the ambience at a small party – good sounds on the radio, Coke in the icebox, dancing with his girl; you can feel Cooke's pleasure. The flip, 'Bring It On Home To Me', is righteously wailing deep soul where he really carries the weight, exulting in gospel call and response with Lou Rawls.



Above left: Cooke crooned, the world listened – his first release on the Keen label, 'You Send Me', hit Number 1. Top: Three of the women in Cooke's life – from left his widow Barbara, singer Elisa Boyer and motel manageress Bertha Franklin. Above: Sam Cooke at RCA.

Laughing at adversity

Fine and varied performances abound among his 22 chart titles for RCA – 'Send Me Some Lovin'' and 'Another Saturday Night' (both 1963), 'Good News', 'Good Times' and 'That's Where It's At' (all 1964), 'Shake' and 'Sugar Dumpling' (both 1965). Frequently moving vignettes in their own right, they make even more sense collectively. A way of life, insecure but ebullient, is suggested. Sometimes a man is down at heel but it won't always be that way; there's a chance he'll soon have two chicks on his arm!

Cooke's compositions and performances often laugh in the face of adversity. One, however, transcends the worldly pain of the individual and becomes a testament to the will of a people. Released in 1965, that song was 'A Change Is Gonna Come', an expression of the age which has become the touchstone for modern soul. Cooke's voice soars against the strings with incredible precision and power. The song flows out, raising visions of revivalist camp meetings and, just below the surface, hints at the new dawn declared by Martin Luther King:

I was born by the river in a little tent
And oh just like the river I been running ever since.
It's been a long time coming but I know
A change is gonna come!

Otis Redding recognised its greatness. He recorded it but fell short where Sam Cooke made it ache.

Sam Cooke was gunned down in a Los Angeles motel on 10 December 1964. His last words were supposed to have been 'Lady, you shot me!' as the motel owner, Bertha Franklin, stood over him with three empty chambers in her gun. According to her testimony she was protecting a Eurasian singer, Elisa Boyer, from Cooke's unwanted sexual advances. According to J. W. Alexander, Cooke was simply looking for his trousers when he stumbled into the room. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of justifiable homicide.

Cooke's widow, Barbara, married his former guitarist Bobby Womack. Perhaps Womack should be allowed to have the last word concerning the circumstances surrounding his mentor's tragic demise: 'What's so awful about it? Haven't you ever been caught somewhere doing something you had no business doing? That's just life, man.'

For the rest of us, the man is enshrined in his music and his enduring influence. Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson, Al Green, Johnny Nash, Eddie Floyd, Louis Williams, Arthur Conley, Johnny Taylor, John Holt, Eric Burdon, Rod Stewart and so many more are each, in their own way, a living tribute to the genius of Sam Cooke.

CLIVE ANDERSON

SAM COOKE
Discography

Singles
I'll Come Running Back To You/Forever (Specialty 619, 1957); That's All I Need To Know/I Don't Want To Cry (Specialty 627, 1957); I Need You Now/Happy In Love (Specialty 667, 1957); For Sentimental Reasons/Desire Me (Keen 4002, 1957); Lonely Island/You Were Made For Me (Keen 4009, 1957); You Send Me/Summer Time (Keen 4013, 1957); All Of My Life/Stealing Kisses (Keen 2005, 1958); Win Your Love For Me/Love Song [from 'Houseboat'] (Keen 2006, 1958); Love You Most Of All/Blue Moon (Keen 2008, 1958); Everybody Likes To Cha Cha Cha/Little Things You Do (Keen 2018, 1959); Only Sixteen/Let's Go Steady Again (Keen 9022, 1959); Summertime Pt 1/Summertime Pt 2 (Keen 2101, 1959); There I've Said It Again/One Hour Ahead Of The Posse (Keen 2105, 1959); No One/'T Aint Nobody's Bizness (Keen 2111, 1959); Wonderful World/Along The Navajo Trail (Keen 2112, 1960); With You/I Thank God (Keen 2117, 1960); Steal Away/So Glamorous (Keen 2118, 1960); Mary, Mary Lou/Ee-Yi-Ee-Yi-Oh (Keen 2122, 1960); Teenage Sonata/If You Were The Only Girl (RCA 7701, 1960); You Understand Me/I Belong To Your Heart (RCA 7730, 1960); Chain Gang/I Fall In Love Every Day (RCA 7783, 1960); Sad Mood/Love Me (RCA 7816, 1960); That's It-I Quit-I'm Movin' On/What Do You Say (RCA 7853, 1961); Cupid/Farewell My Darling (RCA 7883, 1961); Feel It/It's All Right (RCA 7927, 1961); Twistin' The Night Away/One More Time (RCA 7983, 1962); Having A Party/Bring It On Home To Me (RCA 8036, 1962); Nothing Can Change This Love/Somebody Have Mercy (RCA 8088, 1962); Send Me Some Lovin'/Baby Baby Baby (RCA 8129, 1963); Another Saturday Night/Send Me Some Lovin' (RCA 8164, 1963); Frankie And Johnny/Cool Train (RCA 8215, 1963); Little Red Rooster/You've Gotta Move (RCA 8247, 1963); Good News/Basin Street Blues (RCA 8299, 1964); Good Times/Tennessee Waltz (RCA 8368, 1964); Cousin Of Mine/That's Where It's At (RCA 8426, 1964); Shake/A Change Is Gonna Come (RCA 8486, 1965); It's Got The Whole World Shakin'/Ease My Troublin' Mind (RCA 8539, 1965); When A Boy Falls/ The Piper (RCA 8586, 1965); Sugar Dumpling/Bridge of Tears (RCA 8631, 1965); Feel It/That's All (RCA 8751, 1966); Let's Go Steady Again/Trouble Blues (RCA 8803, 1966); Meet Me At Mary's Place/If I Had A Hammer (RCA 8934, 1967); Darling I Need You Now/Win Your Love For Me (Cherie 4501, 1971); Christ Is All/Just Another Day (Specialty 928, 1971).

Albums (selective)
Two Sides Of Sam Cooke (Specialty 2119); *Wonderful World Of* (Keen 86106); *The Best Of Sam Cooke* (RCA 2625); *Mr Soul* (RCA 2673); *Shake* (RCA 3367).

The turbulent career of Little Willie John

LITTLE WILLIE JOHN brought soul to blues balladry and helped to change the whole direction of black popular music. Born William Edward John in Camden, Arkansas, on 15 November 1937, he grew up in a Detroit household with four brothers and two sisters. An early musical influence was his mother, who played gospel piano. Willie's father worked the night shift at the Dodge car factory, and when he was nine young Willie began slipping out of his bedroom window to sing on street corners – and got a thrashing when his father found out. Dizzy Gillespie, the

great jazz trumpeter who'd heard the precocious child at a talent contest, pleaded the boy's cause and encouraged his singing.

At 11, Willie got his first real singing job at the Book-Cadillac hotel and three years later obtained a series of prestigious one-nighters with Count Basie. In 1951 he entered a talent contest hosted by Johnny Otis at Detroit's Paradise Theatre. Willie impressed Otis, who recommended him to Syd Nathan of King Records, but Nathan ignored him and signed Willie's fellow contestants, Hank Ballard and the Royals. By this time, Willie's father had resigned from Dodge and was accompanying his son on his engagements.

Little Willie – he was just 5 foot 4 inches tall – continued to build a following around his adopted city, where he recorded for Prize. 'Mommy What Happened To The Christmas Tree' came out in December 1953 and was credited on the label to 'Little Willie John, Three Lads and a Lass'. Willie also appeared with Paul Williams and added novelty appeal by singing along to the orchestra leader's huge instrumental hit, 'The Hucklebuck'. The following year Willie was signed by King.

Hitting the big time

During the late Fifties and early Sixties, James Brown, Hank Ballard and Willie John formed the backbone of the King label, where Willie racked up a dozen Top Twenty R&B hits and as many as 14 nationally popular best-sellers. His debut disc, produced by Henry Glover, covered Titus Turner's bouncy rocker, 'All Around The World'. It outsold the original, reaching Number 6 on the R&B chart in 1955, and propelled the fiery teenager into the big league. The spare but emotional 'Need Your Love So Bad', which got to the R&B Number 5 confirmed this promise. Written by Willie's brother Mertis, the song is one of the great blues ballads, brooding, dark and despairing.

In 1956, Willie's recording of 'Fever' consolidated his hold over black audiences and reached the top spot on the R&B charts, where it remained for half a year. This remarkably original song, with brittle delivery and stark finger-snaps, took over six hours to record. The effort was worthwhile nonetheless, for the disc broke through racial barriers and gave Willie his first Top Thirty pop hit. Joe Tex, Eddie Cooley, Otis Blackwell, Titus Turner and Willie himself have all claimed authorship of 'Fever'.

Most of Willie's sessions were held at New York's Beltone studios with an eight-piece combo including Mickey Baker (guitar) and Panama Francis (drums), with Henry Glover at the helm. Some took place in Cincinnati, however, under Syd Nathan, the owner of King Records.

Hillbilly singer Lattie Moore has fond memories of these occasions. 'I used to watch a lot of rhythm'n'blues [men] record, an' that was somethin' else. Syd would try an' give 'em hell but they'd all be drunk an' they'd throw bottles and instruments at him. I used to like Little Willie Johns [*sic*]. He was a hot-tempered fellow but he really dug country music an' him bein' a bigger fan of country more'n most country fans it meant I could talk to him. Besides, he could get more money outa Syd than anybody else. He'd be in jail a lot an' wire Syd, who'd have to bail him out.'

In the wake of his first big hits, Willie married a chorus girl whom he met onstage at the Apollo Theatre. By 1958 they had two children and his family travelled with him on tours across the USA.

Singing like a veteran

Managed by Harry Balk – one of Detroit's foremost entrepreneurs who later managed Del Shannon and Johnny and the Hurricanes – Willie remained in the pop charts between 1958 and 1961. 'Talk To Me, Talk To Me', written by Joe Seneca of the veteran Forties group, the Three Riffs, hit the Top Twenty in 1958. Willie's treatment echoed Sam Cooke's 'You Send Me', but his expressive voice was more reminiscent of the Texan blues shouters he often resembled on hard rockers like 'I'm Shakin', 'Let's Rock While The Rockin's Good' and 'Leave My Kitten Alone'.

All these releases displayed an assurance few young singers possessed; at 22, Willie had a voice that was rich, mature and laced with experience. He sang like a grizzled veteran.

The volatile Little Willie John cut a wide range of material, from pop and R&B rockers to blues ballads and standards.

Other hits, including 'You're A Sweetheart', 'Tell It Like It Is' (another soul anthem from the pen of Titus Turner), 'Let Them Talk' and 'Heartbreak', were superseded by 'Sleep', his biggest pop hit which reached Number 13 in 1960. First recorded in 1928 by Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians, 'Sleep' was transformed by Willie into a soul lullaby.

Biggest hit or not, Willie is best remembered for his melancholy blues-ballads, especially the Southern-styled 'Big Blue Diamonds', the desperate 'If I Thought You Needed Me' and the wonderful 'My Baby's In Love With Another Guy', where he rides the band's triumphantly incongruous beat with the words 'When I got home this morning I found a letter on my bed/When I opened up that letter I broke down and cried'. It's a rare, moving performance.

Sadness in life and song

There was an overwhelming sadness in most of Willie's songs. Although the lyrics rarely extended beyond broken love affairs, the overpowering intensity suggested a much wider context, namely what it was like to be black long before it was fashionable to sing of black pride. 'Sufferin' With The Blues' pointed to this general condition and Willie sang it with impressive maturity.

'Leave My Kitten Alone' was a hit all over again in 1961 (beating a revival by Johnny Preston of 'Running Bear' fame), but as the hits petered out Willie began to crack up. For long a volatile character and heavy drinker, he developed a habit of carrying a gun or knife which friends attributed to paranoid feelings about his height. Fearing he might kill someone in anger, or after drinking too much, his band members urged him to take care. Willie didn't listen. In 1966 he stabbed a railroad employee during a brawl in a Seattle cafe, was convicted of manslaughter and sent to Washington State Penitentiary.

Willie's sister, Mabel John, who recorded for Motown and Stax and spent many years with the Raelettes, spoke of his problems in the mid Sixties. 'If you get into it so young you don't have a complete childhood. That's what happened to Willie. He's 29 now and he's a little boy doing all the things that little kids do.'

On 26 May 1968, Willie died in prison of pneumonia, leaving a widow and two sons in Detroit. His influence remains enormous, if sadly underestimated. Many of his recordings inspired revivals by other singers including Fleetwood Mac, who scored with 'Need Your Love So Bad'; Junior Parker and B. B. King, both of whom revived 'Home At Last' as 'Country Girl'; Johnny Preston, who recorded 'Leave My Kitten Alone'; and Peggy Lee and Elvis, two of many who revived 'Fever'. More recently, the Los Angeles rockabilly band the Blasters resuscitated 'I'm Shakin''.

Other performers also listened closely to Little Willie. They included Johnny Adams, the New Orleans soul man whose resemblance was often uncanny, Al Green and Gary US Bonds, both of whom named Willie among their favourite singers, and James Brown, Soul Brother Number One, who recorded a tribute album entitled *Thinking About Little Willie John And A Few Nice Things*.

BILL MILLAR

Little Willie John
Recommended Listening

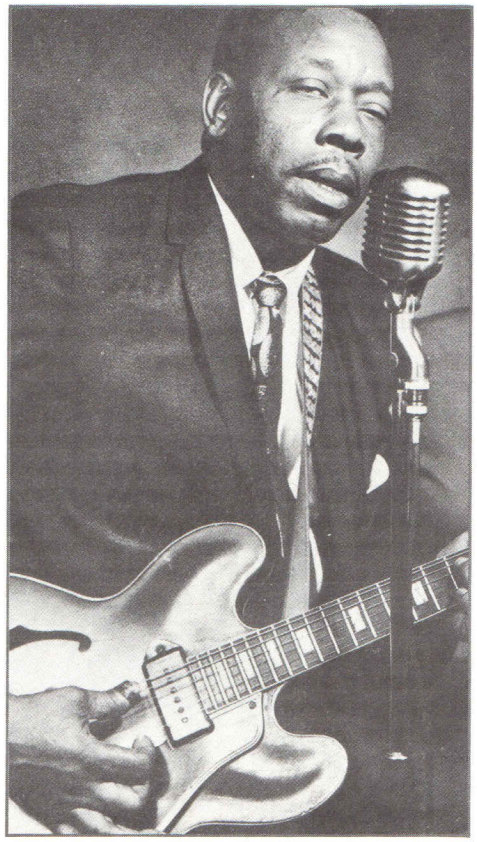
Free At Last (King GD 5034/2) (Includes: Sleep, Need Your Love So Bad, Fever and My Baby's In Love With Another Guy).

MUSIC UNLIMITED

The explosion of black music across the USA

AMERICAN MUSIC in the late Forties, recovering from the twin sideswipes of a war and a recording shutdown, ought to have been sluggish and aimless. But the GIs came home to a musical world in ferment: for the next decade the joints were jumping, the record presses pumping, and the nation blinked at the revolutions in sound and style. There was new music everywhere, and most of it was new black music.

Blues, a polished and almost machine-made product by the end of the Thirties, a commercial property shared among a few cliques of artists, a handful of powerful A&R men and a mere three record companies, shook itself apart and came back revitalised in a score of new forms. Jazz went wood-shedding and emerged all but unrecognisable. There were sounds no one had heard before – honking R&B combos, raw electric blues, slick gospel quartets, zydeco, doo-wop. This was the background from which came the new black singing stars. And it was from a combination of these sounds that soul emerged in the late Fifties and early Sixties.

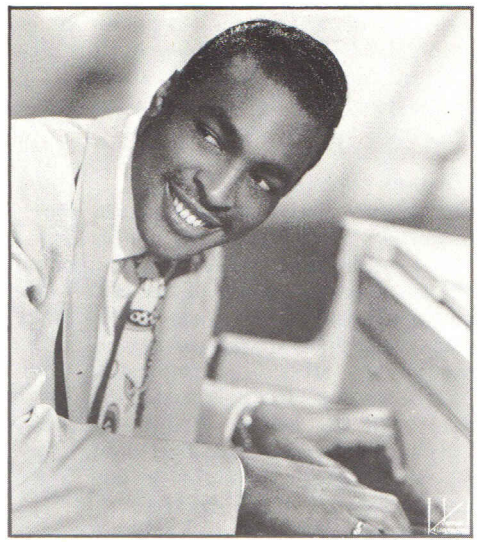


Above: Chicago night-life at the Harlem Inn. Below: The King Bee himself, bluesman Slim Harpo.

Red-eyed and ecstatic

In the Eastern cities, New York and Newark, Philly, Baltimore, Cleveland and Cincinnati, the dawn was rising red-eyed on the honk'n'shout bands. Ecstatic tenor-players bent over backwards, blowing endless hot choruses like smoke-rings. Groomed vocalists bawled and growled uptempo stomp songs or weeping-eyed blues ballads. It was the time of Roy Brown and his Mighty Mighty Men, or Bullmoose Jackson and his Buffalo Bear-cats. Down in Atlanta, Billy Wright and, soon, Little Richard injected the strong arm of the blues with gospel's subtlety.

In Harlem, bands like Louis Jordan's Tympany Five still wowed the club trade, while down in the alley dives the young Brownie McGhee and Champion Jack Dupree played blues for the still-dizzy Southern country types new in town. 'Where you from, boy?' says the compere at an Apollo Theatre amateur night. 'Uh, Greensboro, North Carolina,' diffidently admits the hopeful. 'GREENsboro, North Car'LINA?' whoops the MC. 'Boy, I want to welcome you to the United States!'



Meanwhile in Chicago and Detroit the industrial plants were returning to pre-war production levels, and thousands upon thousands of Southern blacks were riding north to become meat-packers and auto-workers. It was the generation that had seen, or just missed, war service; and it was young and restless after years of musical short rations. Suddenly the bars of the Windy and Motor Cities were shaking to a new pulse. Country boys scarcely out of farm overalls were bringing in guitars and harmonicas, and beat-up PA systems to play them through. The down-home blues had come to town, wild moans of a Mississippi night transformed by energy and electricity into the drink-and-dance music of the urban black worker.

Chicago had the best of it: Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, Elmore James, Little Walter, Jimmy Reed. Detroit never established a scene like that although it had one lone crazy pioneer of electrified downhome blues in John Lee Hooker. But these arrivals off the northbound trains did not have it all their way. There were plenty of black bands that didn't just play the blues – novelty groups like the Big Three Trio, which gave blues-godfather Willie Dixon his start, or the small instrumental combos that played the sharper clubs, or the bow-tied harmony groups in the slipstream of the Ink Spots and the Mills Brothers.

Southern sounds

Back South, the blues colleges from which the new Chicagoans had graduated continued to turn out fine young performers to fill the nightspots of Atlanta and New Orleans, the radio rosters of Memphis, Tennessee, and Helena, Arkansas. The Memphis class of '51 or thereabouts included the Beale Streeters – Rosco Gordon, whose 'Booted' has been called the first rock'n'roll record; Johnny Ace, pleading singer of blues-ballads, who topped the charts with 'Pledging My Love', then killed himself in a backstage game of Russian Roulette; and Bobby Bland and B. B. King whose financial and musical success made them folk heroes.

In New Orleans the shuffle beat of Professor Longhair, Smiley Lewis and – quintessentially – Fats Domino, and of the crisp bands accompanying them, proved a danceable R&B that scored where the less compromising Chicago music hardly ever did – in the pop charts. Claiming their city's jazz heritage, the New Orleans musicians grew up thinking, not of guitars and harps, but of saxes and pianos. The sounds of marching bands and Mardi Gras and Creole dance-halls echo in their playing as in no other black music of their day.

Further west, in Louisiana, the sounds of Chicago had blown south again and 'turned on' a generation of 'swamp' bluesmen such as Lightnin' Slim, Slim ('I'm A King Bee') Harpo and Lonesome Sundown, while French-speaking blacks, reared on R&B and cajun-style accordion music, put the two musical strands together in what came to be called zydeco.

And on into south Texas, land of the oil-well and the polka – and the crashingly-amplified guitar blues of Lightnin' Hopkins, the romping piano of Amos ('Chicken Shack Boogie') Milburn. But the bars and auditoriums of Houston and San Antonio were also breeding-grounds for the music of the West Coast. As Chicago and Detroit beckoned to the Deep South, so Oakland and LA and Richmond and Fresno swelled with the young, the poor and the ambitious of the Southwest.

There had been a jazz scene on the Coast for 20 years, and small bands had kept the theatres, cocktail lounges and night-clubs jumping through the Forties, as war-industry workers came off shift and on the town. After the War the place exploded with fresh sounds. Texas pianists rolled in with their barrelhouse boogies and lonesome freight-train blues, Milburn and Floyd Dixon, Ivory Joe Hunter and Cecil Gant. In the clubs of Folsom Street or Central Avenue they invented a piquant gumbo of a music, boogie-laced

Above left: Amos Milburn at the keyboard. Above: Chicago's legendary Muddy Waters, whose career has spanned several decades. Above right: The blues vocalising of Charles Brown graced the West Coast scene. Below: Howlin' Wolf in full flight at Los Angeles' Ash Grove.

with caressing, insinuating slow blues vocals. Charles Brown, dapper, with pencil-thin moustache, smokily singing 'I'm drifting and drifting, like a ship out on the sea', sums up a style and an era.

Western ferment

There were tougher approaches, too – Lowell Fulson's lingering, moody Texas blues, or T-Bone Walker's phenomenal one-man development of modern blues guitar-playing in the space of a couple of years and a small pile of records. Like mushrooms after a storm, record companies were springing up everywhere to deal with the action. With their funky labels and hissing surfaces, Four Star, Aladdin, Black & White or Big Town encapsulated the excitement Jack Kerouac described when he first hit LA's Central Avenue. 'What a wild place it is, with chickenshacks barely big enough to house a jukebox, and the jukebox blowing nothing but blues, bop, and jump. . . . The wild humming night of Central Avenue – the night of Hamp's [Lionel Hampton's] "Central Avenue Breakdown" – howled and boomed along outside. They were singing in the halls, singing from their windows, just hell be damned and look out.'

Here too were the polished jazz trios, the honkin' bands with their tenor-powered shamans, the vocal groups *doo*ing and *wopp*ing in subways and on street corners. And always the characters. Like the mad, inspired Slim Gaillard, jazz parodist and exponent of the language of scat singing, the language of *vout* and *orooni*. 'In Frisco,' Kerouac reported, 'great eager crowds of young semi-intellectuals sat at his feet and listened to him on the piano, guitar, and bongo drums. When he gets warmed up he takes off his shirt and undershirt and really goes. . . . They blow jazz for half an hour, and then Slim goes mad and grabs the bongos and plays tremendous rapid Cubana beats and yells crazy things in Spanish, in Arabic, in Peruvian dialect, in Egyptian, in every language he knows, and he knows innumerable languages.'

A freak Gaillard may have been, and an influence on no one (except maybe Kerouac), but curiously his music is a vivid miniature of the bubbling ferment of black music – here a phrase of bop, there an affectionate parody of Basie's 'C Jam Blues', the night-club shuffle of the smooth blues trios, the nonsensical lyrics of the vocal groups, the patter of radio ads, even sly allusions to hillbilly.

By turns cosmopolitan and conservative, witty and plain-speaking, cool and impassioned, black music mirrored the contradictions of the postwar world. There were jobs around, money was in circulation, but black war veterans' expectations, which had been raised by speeches about freedom and kept alive by war-bond drives, somehow didn't find confirmation in the society the soldiers came back to.

Music could offer a means of dispelling this frustration, or at least escape-routes from it. By a combination of circumstances – postwar prosperity, patterns of movement across the nation, technical developments in radio and records and instruments – the strategies of finding these escape-routes were fantastically varied and inventive. Black music expanded and diversified as never before, and popular music ever since has been living off that excitement and sense of discovery.

TONY RUSSELL

Below: The manic Slim Gaillard at the ivories and (bottom) playing guitar with his Trio on stage.

THE GREAT MUSICIANS

Hank Marvin

Hank Marvin (above, on right) playing a Stratocaster alongside Cliff Richard and the Shadows, and playing a Burns Marvin (top). Overleaf: Marvin with a Strat.

Hank (Brian) Marvin started playing guitar in an attempt to copy his American idols, James Burton, Chet Atkins and Duane Eddy. After his group changed their name from the Drifters to the Shadows and began a string of hits in 1960 with 'Apache', the situation was reversed and guitarists everywhere started copying Hank Marvin, whose percussive lead lines defined the sound of early Sixties electric guitar.

Marvin's original guitar experiments had one aim: to get 'that American sound', specifically that which could be obtained from the Fender Stratocaster displayed for all to ogle on the cover of the first Crickets' LP. But you couldn't get many American instruments in London in 1959, least of all a Fender, so Hank bought himself a Japanese copy of the Stratocaster with the name 'Antoria' where 'Fender' should have been. Unfortunately, the guitar also had lifeless lumps of wood and metal where a musical instrument should have been. Eventually Marvin got hold of a Fender catalogue and found that there was nothing to stop a private individual from ordering a Stratocaster direct from the Fender factory in California.

Shortly afterwards a flamingo-pink Fender Stratocaster arrived, with a bird's-eye maple neck, gold-plated hardware and a tremolo arm. The tremolo arm – a levered, sprung device which alternately drops and returns the pitch of the strings when activated by a handle – was quickly absorbed into Hank's personal playing style, and it can be heard from the whining chord near the end of 'Apache' onwards. He also made use of echo, which came from a unit plugged in-between the guitar and amplifier; basically it had a loop of recording tape running around adjustable record and playback heads, echoing and fading the notes recorded onto the tape. Listen to the last note die away at the end of 'Kon-Tiki' or 'The Savage' (both 1961) to hear plainly the kind of subtle echo Marvin was dressing the Strat up in. The combination of the Stratocaster and the echo made Hank the most indentifiable guitarist playing rock'n'roll. Also notable was his ability to control the length of note precisely by using his right hand as a damper. This sort of controlled coordination can be heard on 'Wonderful Land' (1962) and 'Atlantis' (1963).

In 1963 Hank got together with guitar maker James Ormston Burns to design a so-called 'improved' Stratocaster: the Burns Marvin was the result. Just after the Burns Marvin appeared in 1964, Hank explained his involvement: 'I mentioned the idea to Ike Isaacs, my old music teacher, and he arranged a meet with Jim Burns; in next to no time he had his technicians on the job. I knew exactly what I was after, I wanted it to remain perfectly in tune with, if possible, more variation in tone controls. Over 30 models were completed before the final job appeared.' It sold well at the time, with its famous co-designer still chalking up hit singles with the Shadows. The Marvin was reissued by a revitalised Burns guitar company in 1981, an indication of the lasting influence among guitarists of Hank Marvin.

Hank rarely played acoustic guitar as a lead instrument on singles – 'Guitar Tango' (1962) was the exception – but enjoyed subtle experimentation with his electric sound on the hits: double-tracked, in unison and harmonies, on 'Foot Tapper' (1963) and unison double-tracked to strengthen the theme of his own tune, 'Geronimo' (1963). In 1964 he played on two fine singles: 'The Rise And Fall of Flingel Bunt', with its hints of sustain, distortion and relatively free playing, and 'Genie With The Light Brown Lamp', which had guitars switching sounds and stereo positioning in a strong, full mix for 4-track (the stereo only evident, of course, on the later LP version).

The hits began to tail off toward the end of 1965 for the Shadows – 'War Lord', Marvin's fuzz-boxed guitar double-tracked with ordinary guitar, was the last of the decade's Top Twenty entries – and they eventually split in 1969. Reformations and re-groupings have occurred spasmodically since, but Hank Marvin's innovative moments remain locked away on old Shadows 45s of the early Sixties, when he was both the best and the most famous electric guitarist in Britain. TONY BACON

Tony Bacon edited the book Rock Hardware *and was formerly editor of* Sound International. *He also plays guitar and bass.*

THE HISTORY OF

Rock